

EXHIBIT 1

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The former head of Google's self-driving car project has secretly been working on his own startup

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Google suffered a major loss when Chris Urmson, the tech lead of its self-driving car project, left in August after more than seven years.

But a [Tesla lawsuit filed Thursday](#) shows what Urmson has been up to since leaving the tech giant. Urmson has been quietly working with Sterling Anderson, the former director of Tesla Autopilot, on his own self-driving car company, Aurora Innovation.

The lawsuit filed by Tesla in California state court alleges that Anderson stole "hundreds of gigabytes of data" that included sensitive company information for Aurora Innovation.

The lawsuit identifies Urmson as a "business partner" of Anderson's at Aurora Innovation, and alleges that the pair collaborated on "Tesla premises" using Anderson's Tesla-issued laptop.

"Tesla's meritless lawsuit reveals both a startling paranoia and an unhealthy fear of competition. This abuse of the legal system is a malicious attempt to stifle a competitor and destroy personal reputations. Aurora looks forward to disproving these false allegations in court and to building a successful self-driving business," Aurora wrote in a statement to Business Insider.

The lawsuit lists Anderson, Urmson, and Aurora Innovation as defendants in the case that seeks a jury trial to resolve the matter.

Now that Tesla has filed a lawsuit, Google's self-driving company Waymo will explore whether or not to take action itself, a source familiar with the matter told Business Insider.

Chris Urmson did not immediately respond to Business Insider's request for comment.

Google's exec departures

Urmson left Google's self-driving company during a [string of departures](#) in August 2016. Anthony Levandowski, a co-founder of Google's car project, left to start Otto, a self-driving truck company that was bought by Uber. Jiajun Zhu, another co-founder of Google's self-driving car unit, also left to join Nuro, an artificial intelligence startup.



Chris Urmson in a Google self-driving car prototype.

Medium / Chris Urmson

There were [reports](#) of internal struggles within Google at the time as well. Google seemed to be getting overtaken by the competition as Uber launched public self-driving car trials. Some employees wanted to pursue partial autonomy to get a product to market faster, while Alphabet CEO Larry Page insisted on full autonomy, [Bloomberg reported](#) in September.

Urmson told Bloomberg he wasn't frustrated with progress, but declined to elaborate on his departure.

Google has since pivoted its strategy to get a product to market sooner. In December, it spun out the car group into an independent company under Alphabet called [Waymo](#). Waymo has acquiesced on some of its bolder plans, like cars without steering wheels.

Urmson, for his part, was known to advocate for fully self-driving cars before leaving Google. He [lobbied the Senate](#) on Google's behalf for regulations that would allow fully self-driving cars to drive on public roads without steering wheels or pedals.

We can't be sure Urmson's departure from Google was because the company was gearing up to pursue a different strategy than its steering-wheel-less pod cars. But whatever Aurora Innovation plans to release going forward may provide some insight as to why Urmson stepped down as CTO.

Google declined to comment for this article.

"Now, 1.8 million miles of autonomous driving later, I've decided the time is right to step down and find my next adventure," Urmson wrote in a Medium post about his departure in August. "If I can find another project that turns into an obsession and becomes something more, I will consider myself twice lucky."

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